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ABSTRACT

This booklet is designed to help organizations and individuals who are developing new training programs to become familiar with the provisions of the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) that apply to persons over the age of 55. In addition, the characteristics, abilities, and special training and employment needs of older adults are outlined. The first section of the booklet examines changing retirement trends. Summarized next are the basic provisions of the JTPA. Particular emphasis is placed on the provisions of the act that pertain to older adults. Guidelines are set forth for creating successful training programs. Covered in a discussion of core services are outreach and recruitment, individual assessment, career and personal counseling, development of job search skills, and job development and placement services. (MN)

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TRAINING OLDER PERSONS FOR EMPLOYMENT

THE JOB TRAINING PARTNERSHIP ACT

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INTRODUCTION

The Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), enacted October 1, 1983 as Public Law 300, provides special funding for training and retraining services for persons age 55 and over. JTPA has the potential to offer new opportunities to providers of these services and to benefit thousands of older persons who seek financial security and personal satisfaction through employment.

This booklet has been prepared by the Institute of Lifetime Learning of the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) to provide information about older workers and their training and employment needs to organizations and individuals that are developing new training programs. It outlines the many strengths older workers bring to the workplace and attempts to dispel some of the myths associated with employment and older persons.

The Institute hopes that the information contained in this booklet will both broaden the scope of employment programs and services for older persons and encourage older workers to maintain their rightful place in the labor force.

CHANGING RETIREMENT TRENDS

For most of this century, the retirement of older workers has been a natural part of American life and an important way to provide room in the labor market for each succeeding group of younger workers. But there is an increasing body of evidence that indicates a change in traditional retirement patterns. For example, a recent AARP survey of older persons shows that 36% of all retirees would rather be working. The same survey shows that nearly 75% of those 55 or older who still work would prefer to continue working even if they could afford to retire.

In addition to changing the preferences of older individuals, economic realities are creating a new distinction between "older" and "retirement." Declining birth and death rates are aging the population rapidly; one out of five Americans is now 55 years old or older. Many experts predict that this aging of the population will require greater, more sustained involvement by older persons in the workplace if labor force demands are to be met, particularly during the 1990s.

However, several critical barriers currently limit sustained workforce involvement by older persons:

- Approximately one of every five Americans over 55 lives below official poverty levels, and most members of this group lack job skills or possess skills that are obsolete;
- Public and private sector investment in job training and retraining programs has focused predominantly on young workers; and
- Many employees hold ageist stereotypes and often close employment doors to older persons.

These barriers may begin to fall as the new *Job Training Partnership Act* provides opportunities for state and local governments and the private sector to address the critical job training needs of economically disadvantaged older persons and help them gain meaningful employment.

THE BASICS OF JTPA

The Job Training Partnership Act replaces the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) as the major employment and training program supported by the federal government. JTPA incorporates several important changes in the program delivery system:

- **Service Delivery Areas** replace Prime Sponsors as the local juridisctions responsible for administering programs under the Act.
- **Private Industry Councils** comprised of a majority of representatives from private sector businesses are being established in each Service Delivery Area, and will share responsibility with local government officials for developing and implementing local job training plans;
- **Governors** will establish state goals and objectives, select Service Delivery Areas, allocate funds to each area, and administer several state-level set-aside.
- A **State Job Training Coordinating Council** will advise and assist each Governor in most aspects of the system's development and operation.

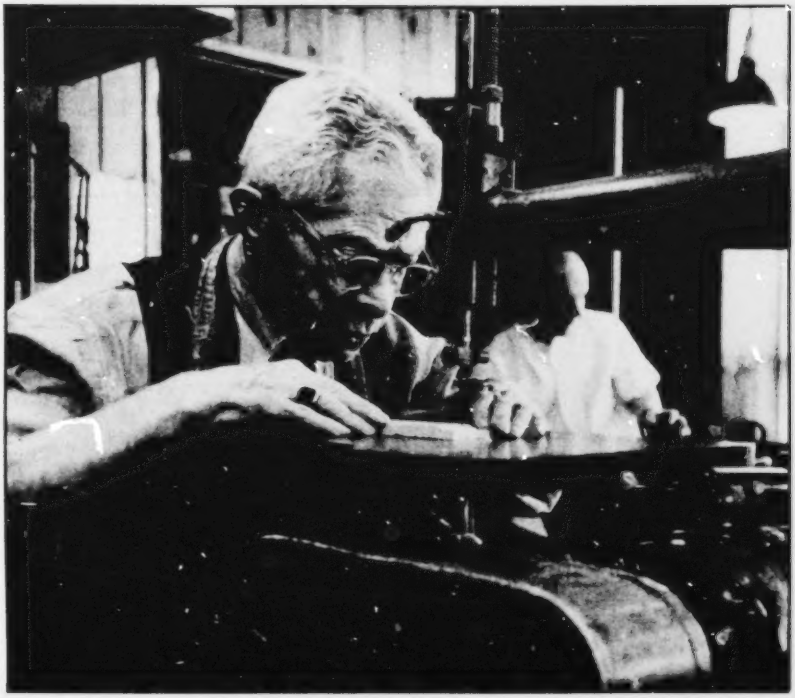
JTPA's service orientation is designed to provide training and related services that lead directly to unsubsidized employment in the private sector. At least 70% of allocated monies must be spent directly on training activities. Together, suppor-

Assumption about Older Workers:

Productivity declines.

Research Findings:

No consistent pattern exists to demonstrate superior productivity in any age group.



tive services, wages, participant allowances, and administrative costs are limited to 30% of total costs, with administrative costs alone limited to 15% of the total.

The Act is also designed to serve primarily the economically disadvantaged who are welfare recipients, receive food stamps, or live on incomes below the poverty level.

Serving Older Persons Under JTPA

The need among older persons for job training and retraining services receives special recognition in three different program areas within JTPA. They are:

• Title II-A, Adult and Youth Programs, the largest of the Act's program areas, is targeted to economically disadvantaged participants,

which includes the sizeable population of older persons 55 and over. In addition, up to 10% of those served by programs in a Service Delivery Area need not be economically disadvantaged if they have encountered *barriers to employment.* Older workers are listed among the groups that encounter such barriers.

- Title III funds are specifically intended to provide training, retraining, and other employment assistance to dislocated workers, including "any older individual who may have substantial barriers to employment by reason of age."
- A special *Training Program for Older Individuals* is established by funding set-asides administered by each Governor. Three percent of each state's allocation for Title II-A is to be reserved for training programs for older individuals. Programs are to be developed in conjunction with Service Delivery Areas and designed to assure that economically disadvantaged persons age 55 and over are trained and placed in employment opportunities with private business concerns. Governors can enter into agreements with public agencies, non-profit organizations, and private business concerns to provide such training, with particular emphasis on preparation for jobs in growth industries and areas that require the use of new technological skills.

These three authorities have vastly improved the opportunities for meeting the employment and training needs of older persons, particularly the economically disadvantaged, when compared to previous federal jobs legislation. But there is still considerable uncertainty about the best way to provide effective training services for older persons that will lead to permanent unsubsidized employment for those served. This uncertainty poses new challenges for program designers to create effective training programs for older workers and to overcome the stereotypes that reinforce age discrimination practices among employers.

MYTHS AND REALITIES ABOUT OLDER PERSONS AS LEARNERS AND WORKERS

"You can't teach an old dog new tricks" is just one of the many sayings used to typify older persons as learners and workers. But research on the learning and working capabilities of older persons convincingly puts these and other stereotypes to rest. To illustrate this research, the stereotyped assumptions about older workers are listed throughout this booklet, along with the research findings that, in many cases, directly contradict each assumption.

Unfortunately, many of the negative stereotypes about older workers are pervasive, even in the institutions that might be expected to provide training for older persons under JTPA. A 1980 study on the availability of education and training for older persons conducted by Conserva, Inc., found that vocationally-oriented classes and programs for older individuals are still a rarity in postsecondary education. The emphasis is currently placed on courses for self-enrichment and life-coping skills. However, a 1981

Assumption about Older Workers:

Attendance is poor.

Research Findings:

Older workers' attendance is as high or better than younger workers' attendance.

Louis Harris poll found that people over 55 interested in education and training are shifting substantially away from courses for general knowledge and social purposes to courses that will help them improve their earning power.

Therefore, program planners under JTPA will probably not need to develop a pool of older persons who are willing and able to learn and work. Instead, they will need to *dispel myths* about older workers' learning and working capabilities and *advocate* on their behalf with potential training organizations, institutions, and employers.

CREATING SUCCESSFUL TRAINING PROGRAMS

Providing appropriate training for older persons will probably require more than simply opening the doors of conventional programs and encouraging older adults to walk in. Research and experience suggest that programs will need to be tailored to accommodate the learning styles of older persons in general and to meet the learning needs of particular sub-populations of eligible older individuals. For example, older persons tend to participate in training because they believe it is directly in their self-interest to do so. They concentrate on subjects that prepare them for a specific employment objective. This kind of short-term, intensive training, specifically related to a particular employment objective, is now preferred by potential participants to longer-term programs that include courses peripheral to stated employment objectives.

Older adults tend to learn best when the learning process is self-directed and self-motivated. Self-paced instruction that approaches content from a problem-centered, process orientation rather than as subject matter to be mastered, conforms better to the learning styles of older persons than conventional techniques.

Assumption about Older Workers:

Learning capacity is obsolete.

Research Findings:

Little evidence exists to suggest any significant change in learning capacities.

The learning needs of older persons are not uniform. JTPA recognizes that different employment and training services may well be needed to help different client sub-populations secure unsubsidized employment. The Act defines training in the broadest terms to include outreach, employability assessment, job search assistance, career counseling, and job development assistance in addition to remedial, occupational, and skill development among other types of conventional classroom training.

This training flexibility is critical to meeting the needs of different sub-populations of older persons. For example, a group of eligible individuals dislocated from employment by business closure may simply need a refresher course in job search skills and resume writing, augmented by employment leads. In another setting, members of a similarly dislocated group may have obsolete skills and need longer-term, formal retraining to prepare for entirely different occupations.

Eligible disadvantaged older women provide another example of the need for flexible and tailored training programs. This group will probably comprise a large proportion of the older persons who are eligible to be served under JTPA, but its members are not a homogeneous group.

Many older women have rusty occupational skills because they have been away from the labor market for several years. Some may need short-term refresher courses in their skill areas

and assistance in seeking employment. Others who have never worked may need assistance to evaluate their accrued skills or develop additional skills to make them more marketable, as well as additional support to find employment.

These examples demonstrate just a few of the disparate needs of older persons who are eligible to be served under JTPA. To meet these needs and adapt training to the learning styles of older persons, flexible and diverse programs are necessary, and the providers of these services should have extensive experience and sensitivity in serving older persons.

Despite variations in the specific training needs of older persons, research and the experience of practitioners suggest several core services that are necessary to the success of most programs. They are:

- Outreach and Recruitment
- Individual Assessment
- Career and Personal Counseling
- Development of Job Search Skills
- Job Development and Placement Services

Collectively, core services could comprise a useful training program for some groups of older persons. Dislocated older workers with developed and transferable skills, or women with developed skills who want to re-enter the labor market may not need skill training, but might profit from all core services. Eligible participants with inadequate or obsolete job skills will also probably need core services in addition to some type of instructional skill training.

Outreach and Recruitment

Outreach and recruitment activities inform eligible older persons about programs available to them as well as the appealing and viable alternatives to these programs. Effective outreach and recruitment is crucial to attract those who need and are eligible for services.

Perhaps more than others, two characteristics of older persons should be recognized if outreach and recruitment efforts are to be effective. First, older persons themselves may believe stereotypes that depict them as too old to learn, too old to get a new job, or too old to be trained. Second, older persons are practical learners who are most interested in the results of participation in a particular training program. Therefore, effective outreach and recruitment must convey the right messages to help potential participants answer affirmatively the questions, "Is this program right for me?" and, "Will I really be able to get a job as a result?"

Delivering the message through the appropriate networks will contribute to successful outreach and recruitment. A variety of local organizations and agencies that have frequent contact with segments of the older population can help program operators develop effective outreach techniques and assist in getting messages out to target populations. Area Agencies on Aging, local AARP Chapters, and senior citizens centers are a

few of the local groups that can help train program providers to develop and operate effective outreach and recruitment services.

Individual Assessment

Individual assessment involves much more than determining the eligibility of potential participants for JTPA services. The process also helps individuals review their personal and employment experience, their future goals, and their strategy to achieve these goals.

The assessment process may use standardized tests or interest inventories to better determine the aptitudes and interests of participants. It may also include more informal processes, or a combination of the formal and informal.

Whatever methods are used, experienced practitioners indicate that successful assessment must require participants to directly analyze their own life experiences and determine their own needs. To be successful, the process must help participants identify and assess the relevance of their general experiences as well as their employment backgrounds.

Assumption about Older Workers:

Intellectual functioning decreases.

Research Findings:

Intelligence remains constant for most persons until at least age 70.

An older woman who has not been part of the labor market for a sustained period may have developed skills through non-work activities that, when properly assessed, have direct labor market relevance. Similarly, an older worker permanently dislocated from a life occupation may have developed skills in non-work settings that, if assessed, will suggest alternative employment possibilities.

The assessment process should also help participants analyze the limits of their employability. Physical limitations, for example, may rule out certain alternatives for some older persons. In other cases, for a variety of reasons, part-time employment may be a more appropriate training outcome than full-time employment. But whatever the case, the assessment process should be individualized and client-oriented. It can stand alone, form part of initial client intake, or be an element of counseling. Whatever its structure, the process is instrumental to fashioning an appropriate employment and training alternative for participants and in helping them envision how their previous experiences, coupled with training alternatives, can lead to new employment opportunities.

Career and Personal Counseling

Counseling can be conducted in individual or group sessions on a formal or informal basis. Specific counseling activities may vary according to the needs of participants, but experienced practitioners indicate that many disadvantaged older persons need assistance to establish concrete goals and delineate the steps necessary to attain them.

Appropriate counseling processes may be as simple as reinforcing goals established during an initial assessment session, particularly among those who have strong employment histories. But for other groups of participants, particularly those who have been out of the labor force for a sustained period, counseling may require systematic and ongoing approaches. For example, it might require sessions designed to improve participants' self-confidence and decision-making/direction-setting skills. Some participants may need additional counseling to help them understand job requirements, employer expectations, and useful techniques to develop appropriate work habits.

Without periodic reinforcement and encouragement from empathic counselors, some participants may not complete their classroom training activities.

Other older persons may need assistance with personal, financial, transportation, or situational problems that prevent them from successfully pursuing training and/or employment.

Counseling has become an essential service of effective employment and training programs for older persons. And, while the actual content and scope of the counseling provided will vary with the individuals served, effective programs will have a well-developed counseling component that is staffed by individuals who are sensitive to the personal and job counseling needs of the older persons they serve.

Development of Job Search Skills

Many older persons who are eligible for JTPA services have either been out of the job market for a sustained period or are recently dislocated from jobs they

held for long periods of time. In either case, these individuals' job seeking skills will be undeveloped or rusty. Learning how to locate and contact employers, how to interview, how to write a resume, and how to complete job applications are several of the specific job seeking skills that many participants will need.

Counselors can impart these skills through a variety of techniques, including special classes, group counseling sessions, or peer groups such as job clubs.

Job Development and Placement Services

Placement of participants in unsubsidized employment is the goal of all training programs for older individuals authorized by JTPA. Experience indicates that there are two key elements to the successful development of jobs for older persons.

First and foremost, staff must advocate on behalf of older persons with employers to effectively develop job positions. Common ageist stereotypes among employers need to be recognized and job developers must be ready and able to counter these stereotypes by citing the benefits to employers in employing older individuals.

Second, programs in the job development process should be creative. Positions that are part-time, job-

Assumption about Older Workers:

Compared to younger workers, older workers are not worth the investment to train.

Research Findings:

Employees aged 20 - 30 stay with a company an average of 3.4 years; those aged 50 - 60 stay an average of 15 years.

shared or on flexi-time, or that are created for temporary replacements may fit the needs of some participants better than full-time, permanent employment. Other participants who have developed occupational skills may need guidance to establish their own home businesses. Using job clubs or job fairs to further the job development process are other examples of creative approaches to job development that may be appropriate and that have been used effectively by existing training programs for older persons.

In addition, counselors who have experience in developing jobs for older persons can be tapped creatively by program operators. These individuals can be located through local Employment Service Offices and Senior Citizens Job Service Centers, as well as other senior employment programs such as the Senior Community Service Employment Program which operates in many cities throughout the country.

Instructional Training

Many older persons who are eligible for training under JTPA may need instructional skill training to successfully gain unsubsidized employment. The kinds of instruction needed will generally fall into four primary categories:

- **Remedial and Basic Skill Instruction** - particularly for those who have English language deficiencies or lack a high school diploma;
- **Occupational Refresher Training** - for those who have developed, but seldom used skills and who need to "brush up" before seeking employment;
- **Employment Competency Training** - to develop work habits and attitudes, particularly for those who have been out of the labor force for a substantial period or are new to it; and,
- **Occupational Skill Development** - to provide intensive training in specific job areas for those with limited or obsolete job skills.

Ideally, JTPA-supported

training programs for older persons would incorporate all of these options and place individual participants in the component appropriate to their needs, moving them from one component to the next as they progress. Community and junior colleges are often suitable training providers for older persons because they generally have all four instructional components in place. In most cases, individual participants can be "mainstreamed" into appropriate existing instructional programs or specially created "older persons sections."

Regardless of who provides the instruction, researchers and practitioners suggest the following points

Assumption about Older Workers:

Motivation decreases.

Research Findings:

Older workers demonstrate greater job satisfaction, less stress on the job, and fewer admissions to psychiatric treatment.

as keys to providing successful instructional programs for older persons:

- Instruction should be directly related to the occupational objectives of participants. Peripheral courses should be limited or eliminated.
- Occupational skill training should be confined to occupational areas in which participants have a legitimate chance for employment upon program completion.
- Instruction that provides practical "hands on" experience will be preferred by participants over passive forms of learning.
- Learning style and experiential differences among older persons are best accommodated by self-paced and individualized instruction.
- Intensive, short-term training that moves participants quickly toward attaining their employment objectives will be preferred to longer-term instructional programs.

Selecting Training Providers

The employment and training services described above provide useful criteria for state and local JTPA planners. In some areas, several organizations and institutions may already have experience in providing appropriate employment and training services to older individuals. JTPA funds for older persons can strengthen these existing programs and expand the scope of services provided and/or the number

of older persons served. In other settings where fewer organizations have experience with older adults, JTPA funds can be used to stimulate new employment and training programs for older individuals. In any case, financial support will be limited relative to the growing employment and training needs of older persons.

To help plan employment and training services for older individuals and select service providers, JTPA planners can consult with various agencies and organizations that serve other needs of older persons. These resources include:

- State Offices on Aging;
- Area Agencies on Aging;
- Local senior employment programs, including local Senior Community Service Employment Programs supported by Title V of the Older Americans Act;
- Local senior citizens councils and centers;
- Senior nutrition programs; and
- Local AARP chapters.

Assumption about Older Workers:

Accidents on the job increase.

Research Findings:

Older workers have fewer accidents in situations that require judgment based upon experience and expectation of hazard.

Other helpful resources include national organizations and associations such as:

- AARP's Institute of Lifetime Learning
- National Association of Area Agencies on Aging
- National Association of State Units on Aging

- National Council on the Aging
- National Governors Association, and
- National Commission on Employment Policy

AARP's Institute of Lifetime Learning provides the following free resources to assist older people, organizations, and agencies in education and employment strategies and opportunities:

- *Second Career Opportunities for Older Persons,* a pamphlet which provides general guidance for older persons who are searching for employment.
- *Learning Opportunities for Older Persons,* a pamphlet that outlines general information on educational programs for people who are interested in reschooling.
- *Second Career Opportunities for Older Persons Program Guide,* a resource kit developed for professionals and groups who want to establish employment services for older persons at the local level.

The Job Training Partnership Act offers many new opportunities to provide training and employment for older persons. Those of you who are involved in planning and programming strategies have an important mission in the development of dynamic and meaningful training programs to assist this worthy minority.

INSTITUTE OF LIFETIME LEARNING

American Association of Retired Persons

The Institute of Lifetime Learning is the continuing education service of the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP). AARP serves a membership of more than 15 million persons age 50 and over, and is dedicated to helping older persons achieve lives of independence, purpose and dignity.

The Institute promotes opportunities for older persons to continue to learn, to prepare for new jobs and careers, and to become involved in media and new technologies. As a resource center on lifetime learning and aging, it publishes materials related to education for older persons, conducts surveys, initiates workshops and provides technical assistance to organizations interested in developing education and training programs for older persons.

The Institute also provides informative pamphlets and technical assistance to individuals and/or organizations that need information regarding employment of older people. To monitor and advocate for national policy related to education, training, and employment programs, the Institute works closely with AARP's legislative department.

Additionally, the Institute is exploring the use of technology in the field of aging in such areas as computer-based instruction, two-way interactive radio-TV, cable television, and new product development.

For further information contact:

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